

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
CENTER FOR COGNITIVE STUDIES

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May 1, 1963

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Dr. George E. Forsythe, Director
Computation Center
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Dear Dr. Forsythe:

I have known Marvin Minsky since he was a junior at Harvard, and it gives me great pleasure to write in support of his candidacy for a position at Stanford.

I believe that the most important thing to be said about Minsky is that he is a man with an enthusiastic vision of the future possibilities in the use of computers, and particularly in their use to strengthen the intellectual capacities of human beings. His knowledge of the area that has come to be called Artificial Intelligence is encyclopedic, and it is my understanding that he is extraordinarily adept at inspiring young men who study with him; his courses at MIT have an excellent reputation with my graduate students.

It is my impression that his role has been more to stimulate and direct the work of others than actually to do the work himself. That is to say, I think he would be wasted if he were put alone in a small university; in the context of a large and ongoing operation, however, he can provide an extremely valuable catalytic agent.

He has, on occasion, irritated many people by making dogmatic statements about the triviality of their work and their blindness in not exploiting computers to do their work more effectively. I assume that he would not be so irritated if there were not a large element of truth in what he says. Personally, I have always been grateful to Minsky for his willingness to enter into the heated battles that always surround the acceptance of technological innovation.

As for the conditions under which he might be motivated to leave MIT for Stanford, I can only say that he is the kind of person who will go wherever the largest computer is. I am sure, however, that his great admiration and personal affection for John McCarthy will work strongly in your favor, and that if you were to sweeten the pot by offering a promotion in academic rank, I would be very nervous about your possibilities of success. Personally I value him highly and hope that he will stay in the Cambridge community.

Sincerely yours,


George A. Miller

GAM/km